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TO THE EDITOR:

I've been a big fan of *T&C*'s essay reviews of works in our field. Generally, I think the scholarly community is well served by longer, more detailed appraisals than the 750 words or so demanded by the book review genre and permitted by the available space. But I am disappointed with Josef Konvitz's recent essay review of our edited volume *Urban Machinery: Inside Modern European Cities* (April 2010, 474–76).

I can't be sure of how or why Konvitz chose to frame his negative review; any scholar is entitled to her or his own assessment of a work. Still, I believe that this review falls substantially short of the thoughtful, comprehensive, well-reasoned, and insightful reviews that *T&C* aims to publish. The following are the most serious problems:

1. The review's text does not provide sufficient evidence that the reviewer considered the volume as a whole. Three people—quite independently of one another—have suggested to me that the reviewer did not read the book. At the very least, most seriously, the review makes a number of unfortunate errors in *describing the contents of the book*. While the second paragraph asserts that “Airports, canals and ports, and railroads . . . do not figure in this book,” a close reading of chapter 5 on tourism finds prominent treatment of both airports (“the decisive technological step toward mass tourism . . . was the rebuilding of the Malaga airport” [p. 116]) and railroads (“Railways modified the geography of tourism in Europe” [p. 111]). Canals and ports are prominent in chapter 2, which deals with the shifting economic and geographical battle between cities on the Rhine River to be “head of navigation,” including substantial detail on French canals (pp. 34–35); in chapter 3 on modernizing Istanbul (p. 53), where the continuing importance of waterborne transportation is emphasized; and in chapter 13 on the harbor city of Malmö.

Our two colleagues writing on eastern and central European cities were quite struck by the fact that the review does not identify the correct cities. Whereas the review asserts that Kraków and Budapest are treated, in fact Pál Germuska writes about eleven Hungarian socialist cities—but scarcely

a word about Budapest—and Dagmara Jajesniak-Quast writes about a different Polish city, the heavy-industry center Nowa Huta as well as two other industrial cities in Czechoslovakia and East Germany.

Notably, paragraph 6 merely lists the *titles* of the book's chapters.

2. The reviewer's text places his own opinions foremost ("How can one write about [Europe] without an economic frame of reference? . . . One finds scarcely a reference to bonds and loans . . . and profit margins" [paragraph 7]) and dismisses our volume's awareness of and engagement with "postmodern concerns about discourse," but the review has little information on the *purpose of the book under review, the qualifications of the authors, and the use they made of source materials*. There is no mention that the volume deals with primary and secondary sources in Swedish, German, Italian, Hungarian, French, Turkish, Dutch, Polish, Czech, Spanish, and English. Six of the chapters are drawn on recent Ph.D. or habilitation theses with extensive archival research in municipal, corporate, and/or national archives.

The review might charitably have mentioned that this book is not a standard "collection of essays" (paragraph 2) but rather the culmination of a research effort led by my coeditor Mikael Hård that began in 2000 and included workshops with the authors in Darmstadt, York, Budapest, and Amsterdam across four years. The book resulted from one of the research groups that formed the productive Tensions of Europe network, which provided the financial means and intellectual occasion for bringing together such an international group. This background, stated clearly in the book's two-page preface (vii–viii) is relevant to an accurate assessment of purpose and qualification.

3. While criticizing the book, the review does not make any *appraisal of the book's place in the existing scholarly literature* or, indeed, whether it adds to scholarly knowledge at all. The review mentions the "ancient" authors, namely Marx, Weber, Georg Simmel, and Robert Park, but otherwise it does not mention a single contemporary author working in urban, technological, science, or cultural history.

We would have welcomed an assessment of whether our treatment of urban visions and perceptions extends the writings of Andrew Lees . . . whether our treatment of urban consumption helpfully places consumers as active agents . . . whether our treatment of urban space adds significantly to the historiography sketched out by Madeleine Hurd, Donald Olsen, and Peter Baldwin . . . whether, indeed, we succeeded in our goal of writing a closely researched and locally situated history of multiple European cities across a significant span of time. We would certainly have welcomed a direct comparison of our volume against David Goodman's earlier efforts to frame European-wide urban histories.

These *three aspects* of reviewing come from George Sarton's classic essay on "Notes on the Reviewing of Learned Books." Sarton's essay is not everything that a reviewer might consult today, but it does contain some hard-won wisdom. I find it ironic that the review by Jens Lachmund in *Isis* (March 2009, 139–40; www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/599643), in generally following these precepts, came to an entirely different understanding of this volume. Succinctly put: in the *Isis* review the contents of the book as a whole are accurately and fairly described; the purpose of the book and the qualifications of the authors are outlined; and the book is placed into a scholarly literature. Above all, it's hard to imagine thinking anything other than that Lachmund read the book carefully, fully, and completely.

THOMAS J. MISA

RESPONSE TO MISA:

Thomas Misa is right to point out that my review of *Urban Machinery* does not meet his criteria of a good review. I tried to focus my review away from an internal approach, which would indicate its place in and contribution to the scholarly literature, and toward some of the larger issues that are explicitly raised by the book. This is another way to highlight its significance, lifting it above the category of a collective monograph. *Urban Machinery*, which is the fruition of a complex, multiyear research project on two continents, does strive to transcend the local and episodic, and it addresses an important topic, the question of the cross-border diffusion of techniques and ideas. In his letter to the editor, however, Misa does not address my comments on the interpretive paradigm concerning the role and impact of technology in the twentieth century, and the importance of questions about cost and investment that operate very differently from country to country, and decade to decade. Are cities becoming more alike, and if so, to what extent is this a matter of the design and adoption of the technologies used to support cities? Is there a European urban technology? I am much more skeptical that the evidence lies in favor of greater uniformity. It is only fair to ask whether the methods and questions that shaped the research agenda fully capture the decision-making that selected the machinery for cities. In my view the book takes us toward a better understanding, but in ways that also reveal gaps—methodological and conceptual—that need to be covered, and assumptions that need to be questioned.

JOSEF KONVITZ